

Developing the Cultural Heritage Workforce

Response of The Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales

The Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales is the organisation for all museum workers, both paid and voluntary in Wales. It exists to promote good practice in the museums and galleries across the country and to provide a forum for discussion of museum issues affecting members.

The Museum sector in Wales is relatively small. Outside the National Museum the sector is characterised by many small museums often with few or even a single member of curatorial staff. This affects workforce development in terms of recruitment and CPD. Response to this consultation is informed by this background.

Consultation questions

Executive summary

1. Do you agree that the recommendations suggested here are the most important?

In general we would agree with the overall recommendations but would make the following comments:

Diversity – work placements and volunteer opportunities are fine but there can be a real problem of capacity in small museums to provide the right environment for such work. There is also the problem in Wales that there are few opportunities to turn such placements or volunteering into actual jobs within Wales. Knowledge gained is lost (this can be relevant to the Welsh Language issue below).

There is a need to ensure opportunities for enough Welsh language speakers to enter and be retained within the profession. [There was an example a few years ago when there was a traineeship within an authority with high numbers of first language Welsh speakers – unfortunately there was no permanent job to go onto after the trainee period and the opportunity was lost to the profession).

Development, leadership – issues of capacity, budgets and particularly time are crucial to overcome in order to develop the workforce.

Sector specific skills – need to encourage curatorial skills not generic experience. There must be the development of transferable skills (into larger museum set ups) otherwise there is a danger of stagnation.

Full document

Under each of the workforce areas where potential actions have been suggested we ask you to consider the following:

2. Have you experienced, or do you know of any examples of activities or approaches being used to address this issue?
3. Can you contribute additional actions that you think could make an impact on this area of workforce development?

4. Which of the suggested actions would have the most impact on you or your organisation?

Workforce Diversity

CyMAL has collected data on workforce diversity through its Quantifying Diversity report. However there was a limited response from museums and therefore some possible queries over the results. We would therefore support the recommendation that CCS collects further data.

Training can be an area of concern where there are few staff – time is limited to get away. If there are also limited opportunities to progress, training can be seen in a negative light. This was particularly highlighted in the report Management and Leadership Development in the Cultural Heritage Sector in Wales carried out in June 2007 by the Creative & Cultural Industries Sectors Skills Council.

Entry routes

On the job training is very important. The development of trainee posts should therefore be encouraged, linked to formal training opportunities. Joint trainee posts across a number of museums would be valuable in the Welsh context of small museums.

Development

There is a role for many bodies (including the Federation, working with CyMAL) to promote a range of development opportunities (including informal training, study visits etc). Perhaps there needs to be more awareness by individuals of what constitutes CPD (MA CPD and CPD+ programmes very useful in this respect).

Leadership

With some exceptions there is a tendency for the profession in Wales not to engage with leadership programmes. Many are happy to be at the level they are (or geographically) – relatively stagnation in museum market in Wales. Need therefore to ensure that leadership development is an essential element of CPD programmes and has relevance to individuals.

Sector Specific expertise

Would support development of subject specialist trainees – expertise tends to be lost (evidence from Effective Collections programme). Need to build a knowledge bank across regions/ countries. National museum expertise is important but tendency nowadays for few ‘experts’ within smaller museums due to nature of the work. Should be a formal programme. Tends to have been a decline in the practical aspects of curatorial knowledge, which needs to be reversed.

June 2008 – response to Museums Association.